

HOUSE BILL 2966

By Hardaway

AN ACT to name a segment of a Tennessee highway in honor of the late Rosa L. Parks, The Mother of the Modern Civil Rights Movement.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges in honor of those exemplary public servants who have worked with purpose and commitment to improve our society; and

WHEREAS, no person is more deserving of this honor than the late Rosa L. Parks, who served and continues to serve as an inspiration to all people who embrace justice, equality, and peace; and

WHEREAS, on December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a forty-two-year-old seamstress, quietly refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus and was arrested; in her lonely act of calm defiance, Mrs. Parks ignited the modern civil rights movement and served to inspire freedom-loving people throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, Rosa Louise McCauley was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, on February 4, 1913, to James and Leona McCauley; and

WHEREAS, as a young girl, Rosa attended the Montgomery Industrial School for Girls, which stressed a philosophy of self-worth and dignity, and after attending the Alabama State Teachers College, Rosa Parks settled in Montgomery, Alabama, with her husband, civil rights activist Raymond Parks; and

WHEREAS, Rosa Parks became actively involved in the burgeoning civil rights movement in 1943, when she became Secretary of the Montgomery, Alabama, Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and

WHEREAS, Rosa Parks's heroic action on December 1, 1955, was the impetus for the formation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, led by the young pastor, Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr.; under Dr. Martin Luther King's inspirational leadership, the Association spearheaded a boycott of the city-owned bus company, which lasted 381 days and fueled a new quest for justice among Americans so long aggrieved; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Parks's righteous cause was brought to the attention of the world after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregated public transportation unconstitutional, thereby setting the stage for the wholesale dismantling of all segregationist laws; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, Rosa and Raymond Parks moved to Detroit, Michigan; there Mrs. Parks continued her commitment to society and lifelong public service as a legislative aide to U.S. Congressman John Conyers, Jr., from 1965 until her retirement in 1988; and

WHEREAS, throughout her life, Mrs. Parks fought tirelessly for the civil rights of minorities in this country, and after her husband's death in 1977, Mrs. Parks founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development; based on Mrs. Parks's philosophy of quiet strength, the organization's central mission is to motivate youth to reach their highest potential; and

WHEREAS, for her unparalleled pursuit of justice and equality for humanity, Rosa Parks was awarded the NAACP's highest honor, the Spingarn Medal, in 1979, and in 1980, she was awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr., Nonviolent Peace Prize; Mrs. Parks received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996, the highest honor the American government can bestow upon a civilian, and in 1999, she was presented the Congressional Gold Medal by President Clinton; and

WHEREAS, in honoring the legacy of this remarkable woman and persistent symbol of human dignity, former U.S. Poet Laureate, Rita Dove, wrote, "At the end of this millennium, it is the modesty of Rosa Parks' example that sustains us. It is no less than the belief in the power of the individual, that cornerstone of the American Dream, that she inspires, along with the hope that all of us, even the least of us, could be that brave, that serenely human, when crunch time comes."; now, therefore,

WHEREAS, in addition to her pioneering work as The Mother of the Modern Civil Rights Movement, there are many other excellent reasons why a portion of Highway 78 in Memphis,

Tennessee, from the Mississippi border to its terminus should be named in honor of the late Rosa L. Parks; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, Highway 78 from the Mississippi border to its terminus at the Tennessee border is hereby designated "Rosa L. Parks Highway" to honor the memory of an extraordinary woman who served her fellow African Americans and her country with courage and conviction as The Mother of the Modern Civil Rights Movement.

SECTION 2. The Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating the route delineated in Section 1 as "Rosa L. Parks Highway".

SECTION 3. The erection of such signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.